

DISPLAYS

FAQ

Q Why don't widescreen TV programmes fill my PC's widescreen display?

A Widescreen TVs have an aspect ratio of 16:9, meaning there are 16 pixels horizontally for every 9 pixels vertically. Widescreen TV broadcasts are also 16:9, so they match the shape of your TV. All HD standards, like 720p and 1080i, also use the same aspect ratio.

Non-widescreen LCD monitors for PCs generally have a 5:4 aspect ratio, such as 1,280x1,024, which doesn't match standard TV's 4:3 aspect ratio. Widescreen PC displays usually have an aspect ratio of 16:10. Displaying 16:9 video therefore results in small black bars at the top and bottom of the screen.

There are numerous reasons for this ratio, but in practical terms, a 16:10 display provides a slightly larger vertical resolution than a 16:9 display of the same size – which makes common computing tasks such as web browsing a little easier.

Seth Barton
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PHILIPS 32PFL9632D

★★★★★

COMPUTER
SHOPPER
ULTIMATE

£689 inc VAT

From www.rgbdirect.co.uk

32in LCD TVs such as Mirai's DTL-832E600 (reviewed *What's New, Shopper* 244) are now available for as little as £350 including VAT, so this 32in model from Philips was always going to have a tough time justifying its high price. Thankfully, it offers a lot for your money in both performance and features.

The 32PFL9632D may not be the most alluring of names, but the TV looks stunning. The glass stand is stylish, feels sturdy, and the screen rotates on it by up to 45°, making it easier to reach the inputs on the rear. This is one of the few HD TVs we've seen with three HDMI inputs, which is plenty for most users.

Picture quality is excellent, thanks to Philips' Perfect Pixel HD Engine. This processes almost every aspect of the image, with clear benefits: picture noise in areas of flat colour is largely eliminated from Freeview broadcasts and motion is smoothed by the TV creating extra frames to match its 100Hz refresh rate. These combine with dynamic contrast control to create a sharper and more life-like image than that seen on most LCD TVs.

The effect of all this visual trickery is most obvious on poor-quality video content such as Freeview broadcasts. HD video also benefits, but not to the same degree. The TV will accept HD inputs up to 1080p, which are scaled to the display's native resolution of 1,366x768. It's compatible with 24p content from Blu-ray discs, so you will be able to watch films at the native 24fps in which they were filmed. For those who like to tweak the settings, there are extensive options and wizards.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Great picture quality
- ✓ Beautiful design
- ✓ Lots of inputs and options

32in LCD HDTV 1,366x768 native resolution, 8,000:1 contrast ratio, 550cd/m² brightness, 3x HDMI, 2x SCART, component, S-video, and composite inputs, digital and analogue tuners, one-year collect-and-return warranty **POWER CONSUMPTION** 77W active, 2W standby
PART CODE 32PFL9632D/10
DETAILS www.philips.co.uk



Using a DVI-to-HDMI cable you can connect a PC at a near-native 1360x768 resolution. We saw slightly improved contrast and more vibrant colours compared to the budget Mirai DTL-832E600. However, there's no VGA input, which means you can't connect some media centre PCs and laptops to this TV. Unusually, there's a USB port for connecting storage devices so you can view JPEG, MPEG1 and MPEG2 files, or listen to MP3s.

Another great addition is Philips' Ambilight technology. Two lights on the rear provide coloured ambient lighting that matches the onscreen action. This adds to the experience of watching movies with the lights turned down and the excellent speakers create an impressive atmosphere.

Dialogue is clear and crisp, and there's even some bass. The remote control is chunky yet comfortable, and there's an eight-day electronic programme guide for Freeview broadcasts. A slot for a conditional access module lets you add subscription TV channels, too.

Philips' 32PFL9632D is the most stylish, best-equipped and highest-quality 32in TV we've ever seen, and thoroughly deserves our coveted Ultimate award.

Seth Barton

Also consider...

LG Flatron L204WS

★★★★★

COMPUTER
SHOPPER
BUDGET BUY

£127 inc VAT

From www.ebuyer.com

This 20in display is far better than its low price suggests. It only has a VGA input and dark images can appear muddy, but its colour and sharpness are much better than most 20in monitors at this price. If you can't stretch to LG's L227WT (right), then this is an excellent alternative.



20in WIDESCREEN LCD 1,680x1,050 native resolution, 5,000:1 contrast ratio, 300cd/m² brightness, VGA input
PART CODE L204WS-SF
DETAILS www.lge.com
FULL REVIEW May 2008

LG Flatron L227WT

★★★★★

COMPUTER
SHOPPER
BEST BUY

£216 inc VAT

From www.lambda-tek.com/componentshop

This 22in monitor has excellent image quality. It displays bright, colour-saturated images that other 22in monitors just can't match. The backlight is blindingly bright, giving whites real impact, while its 5,000:1 dynamic contrast means there's plenty of detail in darker scenes. Because of this, the L227WT is a great choice for games or movies.



22in WIDESCREEN LCD 1,680x1,050 native resolution, 5,000:1 contrast ratio, 300cd/m² brightness, DVI and VGA inputs
PART CODE L227WT
DETAILS www.lge.com
FULL REVIEW May 2008

OPTOMA EP727

★★★★★

COMPUTER
SHOPPER
BEST BUY

£380 inc VAT

From www.lambda-tek.com/componentshop

Optoma's EP727 is a tiny projector that weighs just 2kg. It has an HDCP-compatible DVI input, and can scale 720p and 1080i HD material to its native resolution. Because it uses DLP there's a slight rainbow effect, but colours are accurate and focus is pin-sharp. Our dark screen looked black, while whites were bright and clean. It's a great all-rounder.



OFFICE DLP PROJECTOR 1,024x768 native resolution, 2,200:1 contrast ratio; 2,200 ANSI lumens, VGA, S-video inputs
PART CODE EP727
DETAILS www.optoma.co.uk
FULL REVIEW Feb 2008

HANNSG Hi221D

★★★★★

£145 inc VAT

From www.morecomputers.com

LCD monitor prices are constantly dropping, and this 22in model is only a little more expensive than many 20in monitors. We weren't impressed by the Hi221D's design, though; it's so bland that it's almost invisible. Unsurprisingly at this price, the stand doesn't have height adjustment and doesn't pivot. As the bottom edge of the display sits 190mm above the desk, you'll have to tilt it back or put it on something to raise it up to eye level.

There are DVI and VGA inputs, a welcome luxury on a budget monitor. The DVI input is HDCP-compliant, so you can use it to watch Blu-ray movies over a digital connection. We tested both inputs, but couldn't discern any difference in image quality between them.

Our tests showed that the Hi221D is capable of bright whites, with no colour tints and even backlighting. It handled subtle transitions between colours fairly well and reproduced colours accurately, equalling monitors that cost much more. It was less impressive when it came to darker areas, lacking dynamic contrast control. The Hi221D can't match LG's L204WS (see 'Also consider...' opposite), which dims its backlight to enhance subtle detail in dark scenes. Viewing angles were acceptable, however, both vertically and horizontally.

We found the default quality settings were perfectly good and didn't need altering. We tweaked the poorly placed controls but couldn't improve upon the standard settings.



The 1,680x1,050-pixel native resolution gives you a fairly large desktop on which to work, and will provide plenty of detail in games if your graphics card can handle this resolution. It doesn't quite match 1080p video, but HD video still looked sharp. Thanks to the 5ms response time, we didn't see any motion blur problems in games or movies.

A minijack input feeds the two 1.5W speakers on the underside of the display. Sound quality is poor and there's virtually no bass and lots of distortion above half volume. The three-year on-site warranty is welcome, but standard for most monitors, and we were disappointed that the standby and idle power consumption figures were identical. However, the Hi221D is fairly efficient when in use, drawing only 37W of power.

If you're looking for a big monitor at a low price, HannsG's Hi221D is good value considering the dual inputs and on-site warranty. However, its lack of dynamic contrast means it can't compete with LG's smaller and cheaper Flatron L204WS.

Seth Barton

SUMMARY

- ✓ Big monitor at a low price
- ✓ DVI and VGA inputs
- ✗ No dynamic contrast

22in WIDESCREEN LCD 1,680x1,050 native resolution, 1,000:1 contrast ratio, 300cd/m² brightness, DVI and VGA inputs, three-year on-site warranty **POWER CONSUMPTION** 37W active, 3W standby, 3W idle **PART CODE** HI221DPBRE200 **DETAILS** www.hannsg.com

CHOOSING AN... LCD Monitor

Follow the steps to find your ideal specs

IMAGE SIZE: 17in**NATIVE RESOLUTION:** 1,280x1,024**INPUTS:** VGA

Recommended minimum in grey

1 A basic 17in LCD monitor with the specifications listed above will cost around £95. It will be fine for basic Windows work, but it will have poor viewing angles and colour reproduction won't be very good, so it's not ideal for colour-sensitive work.

2 A VGA input means you'll be able to use the monitor with every PC, but it won't give you as good a picture as with DVI. This digital connection requires a compatible graphics card, but means there are no digital-to-analogue or analogue-to-digital conversions, which reduce the quality of the picture. A DVI connection automatically gets the best picture; you won't have to adjust clock or phase settings as you do with an analogue connection.

3 A 19in monitor will cost around £110 and has the same native resolution as 17in models, but the extra space is easier on the eye. If you want higher resolutions, a 20in (from around £130) or larger display will have a native resolution of 1,680x1,050.

A widescreen monitor like this makes sense if you watch a lot of movies or play games. Budget 17in or 19in models come with a resolution of 1,440x900 (from around £110), while larger, more expensive models have a resolution of 1,680x1,050.

4 If you want a better-quality picture, look for a monitor with high contrast ratios. The higher the ratio, the whiter the whites and the blacker the blacks look. In images with high contrast levels, you'll be able to see finer details.

The viewing angles are important, as wider angles mean you don't have to sit face on to get the best picture. Wider angles also mean that more people can watch your screen, which is useful if you want to show films.

Fast response times cut down on ghosting. Don't be blinded by the numbers, though, as a response time of 25ms or quicker is fine for all applications.

5 Extras such as speakers and a USB hub can be useful, but don't buy solely for them; monitor speakers tend to be poor, while USB hubs cost only a few pounds.

PANASONIC PT-AX200E

★★★★★

COMPUTER
SHOPPER
BEST BUY

£784 inc VAT

From www.digitaldirect.co.uk

A 2,000-lumen lamp means you can use this 720p projector with the lights on. An ambient light sensor automatically adjusts the output, so you get great detail with the lights off, too. There's lens shift for convenience and the fan runs quietly. Image quality is excellent. At 12p an hour it's not the cheapest to run, but you'll appreciate every penny's worth.



HOME CINEMA LCD PROJECTOR 1,280x720 resolution, 6,000:1 contrast ratio, 2,000 ANSI lumens, 2x zoom, 2x HDMI, VGA, component, S-video and composite inputs **PART CODE** PT-AX200E **DETAILS** www.panasonic.co.uk **FULL REVIEW** May 2008

LG 37LC55

★★★★★

COMPUTER
SHOPPER
BEST BUY

£452 inc VAT

From www.digitaldirect.co.uk

LG's 37LC55 looks fabulous and has the performance to match. It's great for standard interlaced video but really comes into its own when handling high-definition (HD) material and progressive-scan DVDs. Colours are rich and natural, and focus over VGA and DVI is pin-sharp. This is a great TV at a very good price.



37in LCD TV 1,366x768 native resolution, VGA, component, 2x SCART, digital tuner **PART CODE** 37LC55 **DETAILS** www.lge.com **FULL REVIEW** Nov 2007

VIEWSONIC VX2435wm

★★★★★

COMPUTER
SHOPPER
BEST BUY

£392 inc VAT

From www.dabs.com

This 24in monitor has every input you're likely to need, and comes with a good pair of integrated speakers. It has a huge 1,920x1,200 resolution, so you get acres of desktop. It's very bright at its default settings, but blacks aren't the deepest we've seen. It's ideal for those doing serious photo or video work.



24in WIDESCREEN LCD 1,920x1,200 native resolution, 1,000:1 contrast ratio, 500cd/m² brightness, HDMI, DVI, VGA, component, S-video and composite inputs **PART CODE** VX2435WM **DETAILS** www.viewsonic.co.uk **FULL REVIEW** May 2008